

MEMORIAL
PAUL DUDLEY WHITE

By J. WILLIS HURST*

AN APPRECIATION OF PAUL DUDLEY WHITE, 1886-1973

"I'm Not Through Yet"

Except for the hand of fate, Dr. Howard Sprague would be here in my place now. I therefore wish to bring a little of his very special flavor into my comments. Dr. Sprague was to speak at a dinner honoring Dr. White at the first meeting of the Paul Dudley White Society which was held at the Massachusetts General Hospital on October 17, 1970. Dr. Sprague became ill at luncheon and was unable to present his comments. Here is one paragraph from his prepared text.

It is not the accumulation of years alone that has built the image of Paul Dudley White. His industry, his unconquerable optimism, his ability to induce his patients to take heart, his gift of serving as an example. His friend, Albert Schweitzer once said, "example is not the main thing in life—it is the only thing." He has been able to convince men that what Sir William Temple recommended is probably true—"The only way for a rich man to be healthy is by exercise and abstinence, to live as if he were poor." But Paul's reputation has the solid foundation of his labors as a teacher, for in the incubation of his laboratory under Ward G and in the basement of the Bulfinch Building were hatched the birds, you in fact, who have flown out to inhabit the roosts of cardiology throughout the earth. This is the stuff of a man's immortality; for as Henry Adams wrote, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

Later, Dr. White spoke in tribute of Dr. Sprague at Dr. Sprague's funeral in Belmont, Massachusetts, on November 7, 1970. Dr. White made a few remarks about his accomplishments but went on to depict the human side of Dr. Sprague and recounted several stories (derived from Dr. Sprague's writings) that illustrated Dr. Sprague's brilliant wit. Dr. White told me how pleased he was to see those in attendance smile and even laugh a bit as they reflected on the wonderful spirit of Dr. Sprague.

Dr. White wrote more than 700 scientific articles and twelve books. His

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early scientific writings served as a bridge between his predecessors and his colleagues and followers. By the early nineteen thirties he was writing about the prevention of heart disease. His first book, *Heart Disease*, published in 1931, set a standard against which all other such books are measured. Following this, he wrote frequently of the epidemic of coronary atherosclerosis and his voice became louder as he urged the rehabilitation of patients who had heart attacks and pleaded for more research in preventive cardiology.

I visited Dr. and Mrs. White about a month ago. He discussed a new book that was germinating in his fertile mind. He also spoke of his patients. He told me how he was planning for their continued care. I quietly thought about the millions of patients with heart disease that he had directly or indirectly aided—such as the sons of taxi drivers and mothers of elevator operators. I thought too that he had directly rehabilitated one American President and, as I knew well, had indirectly rehabilitated another.

Dr. White won and deserved hundreds of awards. He received the American Health Foundation's Eleanor Naylor Dana Award for disease prevention on April 27, 1973. The following remarks were made by Dr. Theodore Cooper, Director of the National Heart and Lung Institute, who presented the award to Dr. White.

A seer he may be; a patriarch he will never be for Dr. White is one of those rare individuals who will always be young. He, himself, has young scientific ideas. He writes to me regularly with imaginative, unexplored, daring ideas. But more than that, Dr. White will always be young because he is forever a part of all those whom he has taught.

The Council of Clinical Cardiology of the American Heart Association has recently awarded him the Herrick Award. His friend and physician, Dr. Allan Friedlich accepted it for him just last week (November 8, 1973).

Dr. White assisted in the birth of Heart Associations in his neighborhood, community, city, state, nation, and all over the world. I once wrote about this and called Dr. White a master obstetrician. I later received a letter from a man who said Dr. White was indeed a great obstetrician. He had not grasped that I referred to the birth of Heart Associations because he reported that Dr. White had attended his birth when he was in Europe at the time of World War I. He wanted to be certain that he was counted among Dr. White's deliveries.

I recall an evening in Singapore in October 1972. I was there representing the American Heart Association at the Asian-Pacific Congress of Cardiology. One very nice man who lived in Singapore walked over to me at a social gathering—not knowing I was then the President of the American Heart Association—and asked, "Do you know Dr. Paul White?" I responded that I did. He said, "He was out here many years ago and helped us start our Heart Association." He paused and then said, "I suppose he's still President

of the American Heart Association." I answered, "Yes sir. He is." I thought, and know you all agree, that Dr. White was, is, and always will be considered to be President of the American Heart Association.

Dr. White wrote "My Own Prescription for Life" in 1967 for the December issue of the *Saturday Review*. He indicated that Bayard Taylor's statement "Men's lives are chains of chances and history their sum" had intrigued him for many years. He pointed out that he had just been lucky in that he was born at the right time in the right place (his beloved New England) of wonderful parents who lived a long time. His comments highlighted his interest in health, heart disease, and education. He also emphasized the spiritual side of his own life when he wrote:

As I grew older and left the family home, I encountered other spiritual influences in a wider world which—despite the tragedies which are a part of living and despite the turbulent decades of the world wars—helped to maintain and enhance my morale, encouraging perennial optimism which, as a physician, I have needed for my patients' sake as well as my own. I still have faith in man's soul. Most important of all in my environment has been the continuation of my family life: Through the many years of marriage, my wife and our children—notwithstanding the difficulties that are the domestic life of a doctor's family—have been a loving family circle, thus adding to my good fortune.

The last sentence of the essay was "May our hearts be always young and gay!"

Mrs. White—Ina—has been at Dr. White's side since she was 22 and he was 38. As the following anecdote will show she has always had a profound influence on him. This beautiful woman has the same spirit and energy as her husband. Think of the joy they had together when in the spring of 1929 they rented a villa on the Island of Capri where they spent four months working on Dr. White's book on heart disease. Think of the happiness they shared as they rode their bicycles in front of their antique cottage on Poor Farm Road in Harvard, Massachusetts. In February 1972 I participated in Paul Benzaquin's "Talk Show" in Boston. My contribution was to state how I, and others who had worked with Dr. White, felt about him. I indicated that his humanism was unparalleled; that his teaching was unexcelled; that his clinical research had been inspirational; and that as a doctor he had no equal. During a station break Mrs. White reminded me gently, "Willis, you know if you say too many nice things about us no one will believe you." She winked at me and I said, "I get the message." I was, by her statement, challenged to say something "not too nice" about the Whites. I thought and thought and the best I could do was as follows: On the air I said, "May I pay a tribute to Mrs. White. Dr. Howard Sprague used to tell us that Dr. White had become so preoccupied with the thought of his forthcoming mar-

riage to Ina Reid that he rushed to the doorway of his office and called for a patient to return to the examining room so that he could take the blood pressure. Now Dr. White never failed to take a patient's blood pressure but under the anticipation of marrying his wonderful Ina he had forgotten to do so." That was the most critical I could be. The program closed with Dr. White thanking Mrs. White for all she had done and Mrs. White remarking what a wonderful life she had had. The show came to an end. Dr. and Mrs. White rushed to the airport to go to another foreign country in the name of the heart cause.

A few years ago Dr. White came to Emory University to present a lecture entitled "The Evolution of Cardiology." The lecture room was filled with people. Excitement filled the air. The audience clearly sensed the talent of a master artist at work on one of his finest pieces. The applause, which was rendered on three separate occasions, was thunderous. Dr. White discussed the men who had contributed to our knowledge over the centuries. He pointed out how he and Alfred Boursy would labor for an hour over one word in their efforts to accurately translate into English Lancisi's book on sudden death. (The book was published in 1971.) He then came to the contributions that were made in the twentieth century. He started with Sir James MacKenzie, then went on to Sir Thomas Lewis, with whom he had worked, and John Parkinson and on and on. The story he unfolded could only be told by a man who knew them all. He pleaded that the names of our various organizations should contain the words "for the prevention and relief of heart disease." He discussed the contributions of his friends in numerous countries who were working for international cardiology which to him was virtually the same as working for world peace. He did all this without mentioning his own contributions. A very special incident occurred near the end of the lecture. He apparently did not wish to talk more than his allotted time and to be certain he did not do so he set his alarm wrist watch to signal him. He was in the middle of an important statement when the alarm went off with a startling buzz. He glanced at his wrist watch and turned off the alarm with a quick slap and said, "I'm not through yet." He then went on to quote from poet-physician Oliver Wendell Holmes' "For the Meeting of the National Sanitary Association." He read the first and last stanzas but placed more emphasis on the last.

And lo! the starry folds reveal

The blazoned truth we hold so dear:

To guard is better than to heal,—

The shield is nobler than the spear!

After the lecture he discussed the human side of the people he knew and loved. He also told of the time he was asked by a revolutionist who had heart disease if his heart would tolerate one more revolution. Dr. White was

trapped between his abhorrence for violence on the one hand and his desire to rehabilitate all patients with heart disease on the other. He advised—"Well, maybe just one more revolution." He quickly added, as though he balanced things out, that he advised another revolutionist that his heart would not tolerate even one more resolution. I only wish that the chuckle that went with that story could be transmitted by genes down through the ages.

The world knows him as a man who squeezed the joy out of every second of every minute of every hour. Simply stated, his greatest joy was the service he could give to all mankind. The following words are appropriate. "Days were never long enough, years never long enough, to do all that he wanted done on this earth. I like to think now *not* that he is at rest but that he is at work—through all of us—for that would be his greatest happiness." Those words were written by Mrs. Lyndon Johnson and refer to her late husband. Those words fit Dr. White for in that sense he is still at work. Can't you see him working? See him standing there in a group of people. One of them is speaking and Dr. White is recording the conversation in his little black memo book. They are discussing a patient. He is giving them the advice they seek. He is pointing out that heart disease is not always as bad as it seems. See him point to his book—*Hearts—Their Long Followup* and see him smile as he recognizes his patients in the pages. He begins to move on for a brisk walk and the people follow him. Note the characteristic spring in his steps and the twinkle in his eyes as he walks on to bring peace to patients with heart disease and peace to the nations of the world. His adventurous and pioneering spirit is clearly seen. He is still showing us that Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes was correct when he wrote that "the greatest key to happiness is to *live* with the actions and passions of your time."

By his actions Dr. White is saying "I'm not through yet."

Dr. White, we agree.

J. WILLIS HURST